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Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

DIA review(s) completed.

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February 27, 1975

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**SURVEY OF COMMUNIST
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA***

(This report covers the period
February 6-26, 1975)

The Key Points

- Ammunition stocks in Phnom Penh increased slightly over early February levels, but rice and petroleum stocks declined further.
- China has delivered eight MIG-19s to North Vietnam, the first deliveries since May 1974.
- A recent CIA/DIA study estimates that there are currently 60,000 Communist military troops in Laos, of whom 27,000 are North Vietnamese and 33,000 are Pathet Lao. A detailed discussion is at Annex B.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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Preface

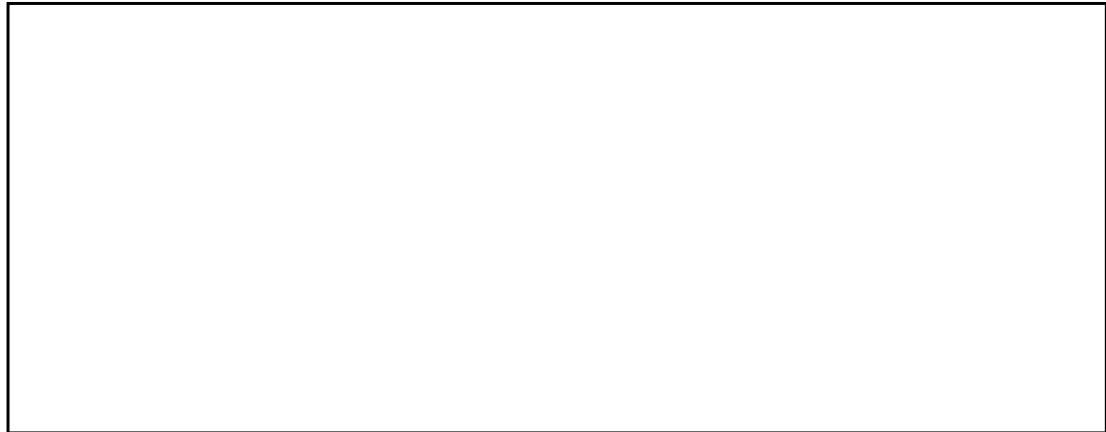
This report summarizes evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

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DETAILS

**I. Infiltration and Redeployment of North Vietnamese Personnel
and Military Supplies**



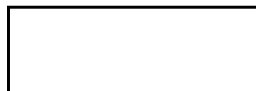
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Comparative Starts of Troops from North Vietnam

| | 1972/73 | 1973/74 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Total regular infiltration cycle, Sep 1-Jun 30 | 94,000 | 94,500 |
| | 1973/74 | 1974/75 |
| Total regular infiltration starts, Sep 1-Feb 26 | 54,500 | 64,500 |
| MR Tri-Thien | 2,000 | 5,000 |
| MR 5 | 3,000 | 2,500 |
| B-3 Front | 6,500 | 12,000 |
| COSVN | 20,000 | 32,500 |
| Southern Laos/MR 559 | 23,000 | 12,500 |



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II. Combat Activity in Indochina

South Vietnam

9. Combat activity in South Vietnam was at a relatively low level during the reporting period. In MR I, a series of coordinated Communist attacks, supported by heavy rocket and artillery barrages, was launched in central Quang Nam Province in early February. The NVA succeeded in breaching the government's first line of defense around Dai Loc and Duc Duc District Towns and captured several outposts. Combat there during the remainder of the period centered on ARVN efforts to retake these areas. In Quang Ngai Province, government attempts to capture the high ground southwest of the provincial capital have met heavy resistance and ARVN as yet has taken little territory. These efforts, however, have succeeded in tying down an NVA brigade and inflicting heavy casualties on the unit.

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10. In MR 2, combat activity has been abnormally low, and South Vietnamese commanders remain unsure of the intentions and locations of major Communist units. The only activity of any significance occurred in the An Lao Valley of Binh Dinh Province, as the struggle for control of that major supply corridor continues. To the south, in MR 3, most of the combat has been in reaction to ARVN operations along Route 13 north of Lai Khe. The ARVN objective is to locate and identify Communist units operating in the area. Communist-initiated activity during the period consisted of some sapper activity in and near Saigon. Sporadic attacks-by-fire also have been mounted against Tay Ninh City and Bien Hoa Airbase.

11. In MR 4, ARVN-initiated operations in Dinh Tuong, Chau Doc, and Kien Giang Provinces have kept steady pressure on Communist forces. While no large battles have occurred, relatively heavy losses were inflicted on Communist units in a number of short engagements. In southern An Xuyen Province, Dam Doi District Town came under heavy pressure from Communist attacks-by-fire and ground probes, but thus far it has remained in government hands. MR 4 also experienced sapper activity directed against major lines of communication.

Cambodia

12. The critical situation along the southern Mekong has further deteriorated with the fall of Peam Reang Island and a battalion-size position at Prek Dach. This leaves the government position at Peam Reang Leu, south of Neak Luong, as the only FANK position along the southern Mekong. KC pressure against Peam Reang Leu and Neak Luong is expected to increase. Moreover, the Communists are continuing their attacks in the countryside to exploit government withdrawals and prevent further redeployments to Phnom Penh and the Mekong.

13. Southwest of Phnom Penh, the KC have increased pressure on the government's 3d Division. This division has the primary responsibility of defending the western and southwestern approaches to Pochentong Airfield and the Kantouk ammunition depot. Earlier in the week, the 3d Division lost some forward positions to the KC and is now counterattacking to regain them. The KC activity in this region is probably designed to secure positions nearer Pochentong in order to disrupt air operations. Communist rocket attacks against the capital and airport have increased in intensity; however, air supply operations have not been disrupted.

14. Farther north, government forces have withdrawn from the former royal capital of Oudong on Route 5. The town, possessing no tactical value, was lightly defended by the government because of the shifting of forces to the Phnom Penh

area. To the northwest of Phnom Penh, the KC have breached 7th Division forward defensive lines in the Route 51 area and are infiltrating forces behind FANK lines. Unless this breach is closed, government troops manning the capital's outer defenses in the northwest will be outflanked.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Status of Stocks in Phnom Penh

15. Despite the interdiction of the Mekong by the Khmer Communists, the Cambodian government's ammunition stocks have increased since early February, both as a result of the augmented airlift that began in mid-February and a reduction in expenditures by FANK. At present, more than 770 tons* of ammunition per day are being flown into Phnom Penh (up from about 135 tons daily during the first two weeks of February). This has increased the days of ammunition supply from 16 as of February 6 to 21 as of February 25.

16. By contrast, rice and petroleum stocks have dropped further as a result of the Mekong interdiction. Supplies are adequate for about three weeks at current consumption rates – compared with more than a month's stocks at the beginning of February. To replenish stocks of rice and petroleum in the capital, arrangements for additional airlifts have been made. Beginning on February 27, PL-480 rice sufficient to meet Phnom Penh's minimum daily needs – 545 tons – is to be flown in from Saigon. Beginning on March 4, an additional 100 tons of petroleum per day will be flown in from Thailand. To stretch existing stocks, the government has reduced sharply the civilian petroleum ration for the second time this year. Drawdowns of rice stocks, however, have increased significantly in recent days as deliveries from the countryside have dried up and refugees have continued to flow into Phnom Penh. Indeed, these factors and increased hoarding and speculation may push the daily requirements up significantly, and the Cambodian authorities may have considerable difficulty in bringing them back down again. The following tabulations show government stocks of critical supplies in Phnom Penh and comparative deliveries via the Mekong to the capital in 1974 and 1975.

* All tonnage figures used in paragraphs 15 and 16 are metric.

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| | Metric Tons | Days Supply | Daily Consump- tion Rate (Metric Tons) | Metric Tons | |
|--|----------------|----------------|--|--|-----------------|
| | | | | Jan-Feb 1974 ² | Jan-Feb 1975 |
| Stocks as of Feb- ruary 25, 1975 ¹ | | | | Mekong Convoy Deliveries ¹ | |
| Rice | 11,400 | 21 | 545 | Total | 109,000 18,050 |
| Petroleum | 7,800 | 22 | 353 | Rice | 51,000 6,750 |
| Ammunition | 10,600 | 21 | 500 ² | Petroleum | 28,100 5,300 |
| | | | | Ammunition | 29,900 6,000 |

1. Data are approximate.

2. Based on average dry season expenditure rate by Cambodian government forces; actual consumption varies considerably from this rate during any given week.

1. Data are approximate.

2. Data provided by the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

MIG Aircraft Delivered to North Vietnam

17. Eight MIG-19 (FARMER) fighter aircraft were delivered to North Vietnam from China [redacted] This is the first delivery of MIG-19s from China since May 1974 and increases North Vietnam's MIG-19 inventory to at least 75. The multipurpose MIG-19 in the past has been used as an interceptor in an air defense role, but it is also capable of being used in an air-to-ground role. [redacted]

[redacted] North Vietnam, however, already has about 125 MIG-15/17s, which are better suited for this role [redacted]

New North Vietnamese Artillery Regiment Identified in Quang Ngai Province

18. [redacted] a rallier's report that an NVA 576th Artillery Regiment is operating in Quang Ngai Province in southern MR 1. According to the rallier, the 576th Artillery Regiment was formed in 1974 from elements of the 572d Artillery and 573d AAA Regiments in Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces and from recruits. The 576th apparently is now operating with the NVA 52d Infantry Brigade in Quang Ngai Province, which lends some support to earlier indications that the 52d Brigade is scheduled to be upgraded to an infantry division. The newly identified artillery regiment, with an estimated strength of 1,000 men, raises to 81,000 the CIA/DIA estimate of Communist regular combat forces in South Vietnam's MR 1 (see the map on Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces).

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Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

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South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

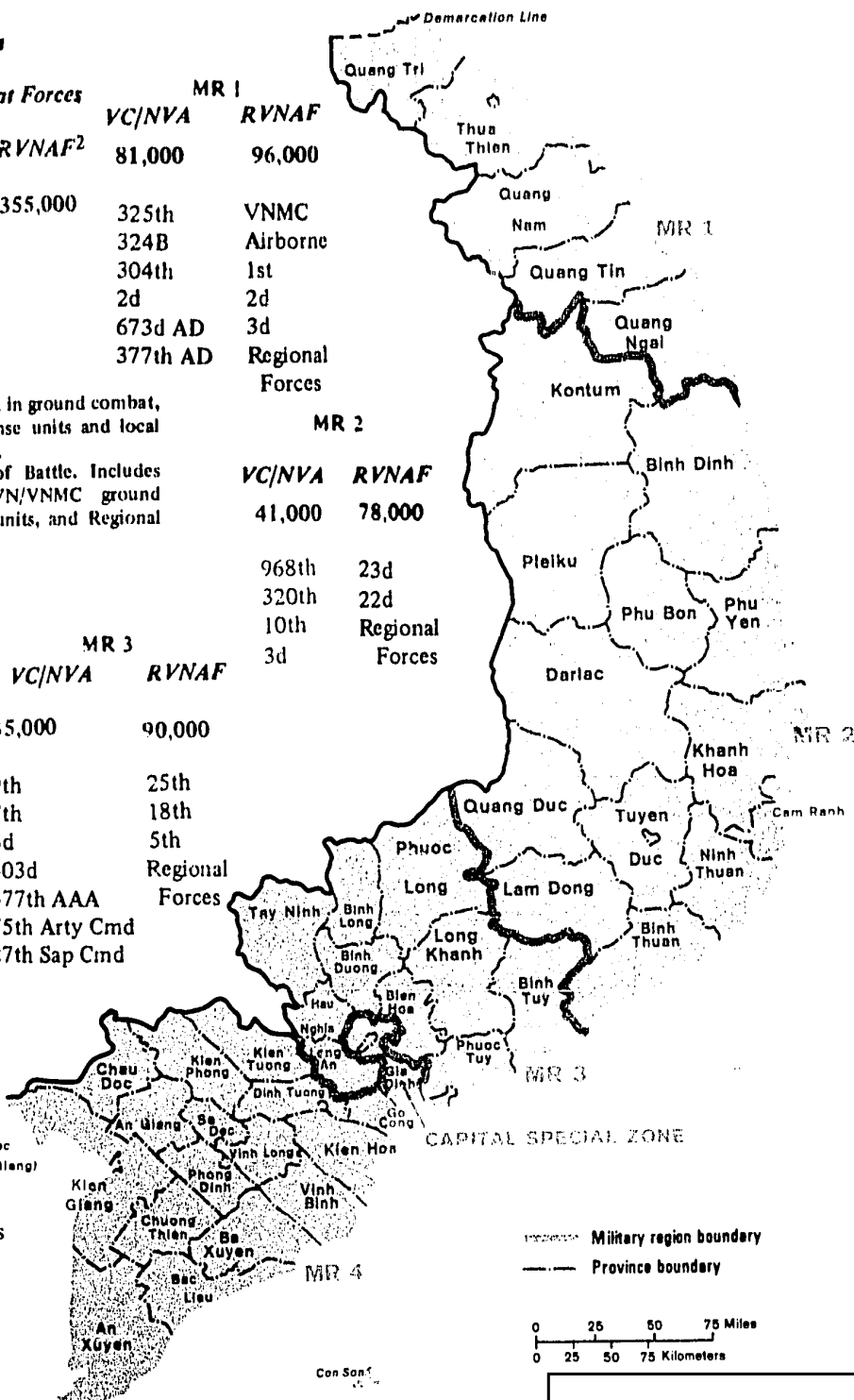
| | | MR 1 | |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| VC/NVA ¹ | RVNAF ² | VC/NVA | RVNAF |
| 181,000 | 355,000 | 81,000 | 96,000 |
| | | 325th | VNMC |
| | | 324B | Airborne |
| | | 304th | 1st |
| | | 2d | 2d |
| | | 673d AD | 3d |
| | | 377th AD | Regional Forces |

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions.

| MR 3 | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| VC/NVA | RVNAF |
| 35,000 | 90,000 |
| 9th | 25th |
| 7th | 18th |
| 3d | 5th |
| 303d | Regional Forces |
| 377th AAA | |
| 75th Arty Cmd | |
| 27th Ssp Cmd | |

| MR 4 | |
|--------|-----------------|
| VC/NVA | RVNAF |
| 24,000 | 91,000 |
| 8th | 21st |
| 5th | 9th |
| | 7th |
| | Regional Forces |



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Armor in Northern South Vietnam

21. The North Vietnamese armor inventory in Quang Tri Province in northern South Vietnam now includes captured US tanks. Four M48 and two M41 tanks were observed on photography of February 4 at an armor storage area located between the DMZ and Dong Ha. This is the first observation of apparently operational US tanks integrated with NVA armor in northern South Vietnam. The tanks were probably abandoned by South Vietnamese forces during the heavy fighting in Quang Tri Province in 1972.



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ANNEX B

Status of NVA and Pathet Lao Forces in Laos

A recent CIA/DIA review of Communist military forces in Laos indicates that there are an estimated 60,000 North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces in the country, of which 32,000 are combat troops and 28,000 are logistic personnel. When the cease-fire went into effect in February 1973, there were 113,000 troops -- 57,000 combat and 56,000 support personnel (see Tables B-1 and B-2¹). The decline of 47% in overall military strength during the past two years resulted from a significant reduction in North Vietnamese presence, while Pathet Lao strength remained relatively constant. North Vietnamese troops currently account for 45% of the total -- compared with nearly 75% two years ago -- their strength having now fallen below that of the Pathet Lao for the first time since the late 1960s.

In February 1973, Hanoi had 83,000 troops stationed in Laos, three-fourths of whom were committed to the protection and support of the North Vietnamese logistics system in the Panhandle. Since then, 56,000 North Vietnamese military personnel have relocated to North or South Vietnam, reducing the number of combat and logistic personnel in Laos by two-thirds. This drawdown included troops in two infantry divisions (the 316th and 968th), three independent infantry, and 10 antiaircraft regiments as well as 29,000 engineering and other logistic personnel. There are now only 27,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos, of whom 10,000 are combat troops and the remaining 17,000 are logistic personnel.² Major combat units now consist of only four infantry regiments (see the accompanying map).

On a regional basis, despite the major reductions in strength, the North Vietnamese still maintain 20,000 troops in southern Laos, or about 75% of their total in-country forces -- the same proportion as in the past. Of these, 15,000 are directly involved with the logistic corridor, which continues to remain an integral part of the North Vietnamese system to support Communist forces in South Vietnam and adjacent areas. Hanoi almost certainly will not abandon this corridor, despite the development of a major alternative corridor -- Communist Route 14 -- through western South Vietnam since the beginning of the cease-fire period. The

1. For illustrative purposes, Table B-3 provides estimates of Communist forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

2. Since the February 1973 cease-fire, our knowledge of Communist forces in Laos has steadily deteriorated.

As a result, we no longer have a timely and complete picture of Communist forces in Laos, and some additional North Vietnamese units possibly have been withdrawn -- or even infiltrated -- undetected.

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[redacted]

maintenance of this system will continue to require a large, permanent manpower commitment, although it will be far less than that needed before the cease-fire.

Overall Pathet Lao strength and capabilities have not changed appreciably during the cease-fire period. despite the halt in the fighting, the reorganization of command lines, an intensified efforts at recruitment. Pathet Lao soldiers continue to suffer from generally the same deficiencies as government troops: poor leadership, a low level of morale, inadequate training, a lack of the will to fight, and - if recent US observations of the care of mechanized equipment in the cities can be generalized - woefully deficient attention to equipment maintenance.

During the last two years, Pathet Lao military forces have undergone two major changes. First, to improve command and control, their best combat battalions have been grouped into at least three and possibly as many as five regional regiments. These regiments, which vary in size from about 600 to 1,500 men operate across provincial lines and are deployed to defend key strategic areas. Second, Pathet Lao units have gradually replaced North Vietnamese combat forces at many front-line positions to lower the latter's profile in Laos. This indicates a sensitivity to criticism of the continued presence of North Vietnamese troops in Laos, and reflects a growing North Vietnamese confidence both in the durability of the Laos cease-fire and in the ability of the Pathet Lao to adequately defend against the limited threat posed by government forces.

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During the past two years, government forces have declined considerably in strength. In February 1973, there were 74,000 government combat (regulars and guerrillas) and support troops, [redacted]

[redacted] Government forces currently number 52,000 men - 25,000 combat and 27,000 support forces - and plans call for the total to be further reduced to 46,000 by June 1975.

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Table B-1

**NVA and Pathet Lao Military Forces in Laos, by Area
February 1975**

| | Thousand Troops | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | Northern Laos | Southern Laos |
| Total forces | 60 | 31 | 29 |
| NVA | 27 | 7 | 20 |
| Pathet Lao | 33 | 24 | 9 |
| Regular combat forces | 32 | 22 | 10 |
| NVA | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Pathet Lao | 22 | 17 | 5 |
| Administrative services | 28 | 9 | 19 |
| NVA | 17 | 2 | 15 |
| Pathet Lao | 11 | 7 | 4 |

Table B-2

**NVA and Pathet Lao Military Forces in Laos, by Area
February 1973**

| | Thousand Troops | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | Northern Laos | Southern Laos |
| Total forces | 113 | 43 | 70 |
| NVA | 83 | 22 | 61 |
| Pathet Lao | 30 | 21 | 9 |
| Regular combat forces | 57 | 31 | 26 |
| NVA | 37 | 16 | 21 |
| Pathet Lao | 20 | 15 | 5 |
| Administrative services | 56 | 12 | 44 |
| NVA | 46 | 6 | 40 |
| Pathet Lao | 10 | 6 | 4 |

Table B-3

**Estimated Communist Military Forces
in South Vietnam and Cambodia**

| | Thousand Troops | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Feb 1975 | Jan 1973 |
| South Vietnam | 288 | 221 |
| Regular combat forces | 181 | 149 |
| NVA | 152 | 124 |
| VC | 29 | 25 |
| Administrative services | 107 | 72 |
| NVA | 65 | 35 |
| VC | 42 | 37 |
| Cambodia | 94 | 91 |
| Regular combat forces | 69 | 53 |
| NVA/VC | 2 ¹ | 8 |
| KC | 67 | 45 |
| Administrative services | 25 | 38 |
| NVA/VC | 8 | 28 |
| KC | 17 | 10 |

1. Serving as advisers to KC combat units.

NVA/PL Military Forces in Laos

